

The Call to Worship

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[0 : 0 0] you're listening to the sermon podcast of grace reforms church in spring hill tennessee to learn more about us visit our website at grace.reforms.org and now today's sermon i had intentions on starting first peter today but in preparation for some of the changes to our service i thought it'd be good for us to learn about why it is we do what we do on a sunday what's the priority why do we have a forum and a structure and so in preparation for next week this morning i wanted to really provide a theology behind one why we gather as a church and then how we gather and make sure that we are following biblical principles for our spiritual health we tend to prioritize what we find most valuable in our lives we we protect them and i hope and pray that we will all see a greater need and a desire and a priority for the gathered church by the time that we're done this morning what i'm not going to do is walk through the exact structure of our service i'll provide that for you later what i want to do is walk through each aspect of the service and help us understand the benefits and the purposes for them and really often the commands in scripture to do them and so we're going to begin with something historically the church has done for as long as we know and it's really based off of an old testament practice but it's called the call to worship and i am guilty of not really seeing the significance of this for many years i just thought it was this moment in the structure where either a verse was read or music was or song was sung and well it's at that moment i needed to sit down and be quiet because the show was about to begin in his book on worship brian chapel explained the biblical purposes behind this i think very helpful i'm going to read this to us it says the call to worship exhorts god's people to turn from worldly distractions and to focus hearts minds and actions on revering him we do not invite him to be present he invites us to come before him god calls us from all other preoccupations to join the people he has redeemed in recognition praise and service of his omnipresent glory god does not simply invite us to a party of friends or a lecture on religion or a concert of sacred music he invites us into the presence of the king of the universe before whom all creation will bow and for whom all heaven now sings we do not approach god on our terms but his i found it very insightful and i think accurate our god this is a wonderful thought to comprehend our god has called us to assemble together which is what the church means the called out assembly so that he can meet with us in a unique and special way he calls us away from the struggles of the world our occupations our temptations our civil responsibilities to provide for us his presence in a unique and i would even say memorable way it is true that god is present all of the time everywhere this is true but how we experience his presence is not always the same this is why there is what's called a call to worship because we are

being drawn into an experience with god and yes it is an experience i know at times we we bristle against that word but when you think about what you receive from your father you are receiving the experience of spiritual physical and emotional blessings from your god and this is why the church service is for the family of god and not the world it's not for the unbeliever they are welcome and we want them to come and observe our god but he has called his children together because it's for them that he provides we are not attempting to entertain or please those that we might have bigger numbers sunday mornings are not gospel ministries for the lost they're gospel ministries for the children who have been found and so for us whose name has been written on his hands this call is a sweet sound it's like the the voice of a parent to the child who's lost in the wilderness when they hear the call of the parent and which direction it is they they come to receive the benefits of safety and reconciliation from that of being lost and so we hear the tender voice of our father he calls to us and this is what the call is supposed to feel and be reminding us of when we gather here on a sunday this is why i had us turn to psalm 20 or psalm 100 because in here you can hear the voice of the father and what it is that he's drawing us with it's not fear and judgment you better come or else he's not barking at us the commands based upon our performance but he's drawing us near with hope and wonder listen to this a psalm for giving thanks make a joyful noise to the lord all the earth serve the lord with gladness come into his presence with singing why why should we do this know that the lord he is god it is he who made us and we are his we are his people and the sheep of his pastured enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise give thanks to him bless his name you are you are owned by him but even more than being owned look at verse five for he is a good god for the lord is good his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations so we sing we praise we shout thanksgiving his steadfast love endures forever is the thing that draws us into his presence for many the church is just a place of judgment and cold-hearted religion and this i understand i have experienced this it is heartbreaking to know that something that should be so wonderful and life-giving can actually be a place of abuse and confusion turn with me into psalm 136 that is not how god intended our time to be with him unfortunately that is the sin and the disobedience of those who are in the church what our expectation should be is this psalm 136 we're not going to read the whole thing we're just going to read a few verses look at verse one give thanks to the lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever give thanks to the god of gods for his steadfast love endures

give thanks to the lord of lords for his steadfast love endures forever to him to him who alone does great wonders for his steadfast love endures forever he goes on for 26 verses you're called to give thanks to the lord because of his love for you it's wonderful so the call to worship should be the reminder of this father towards us not the judge who convicts us but the father who sent his son to rescue you because of his ever enduring love every week when we gather when the call of worship is presented to us it should be that warmth of love that should fill our hearts not fear and judgment but when we hear the words of god read to us we hear them as the voice of a loving father calling us back to receive more of his love the anticipation of relief and joy should fill us not the cringe of doubt and dismay turn with me really quick to isaiah 49 verse 15 49 15 isaiah the prophet is giving this illustration trying to help the children of israel understand god's affection towards them that god's affection toward them is not based upon their experience often we look at our experience our suffering what's going on in our life what it is that we are dealing with and we connect that to our relationship with god but that is that is just not the case and so to people who are desperately confused isaiah proclaims to them in verse 15 isaiah 49 15 can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb even these may forget yet i will not forget you i think we've all felt this at time forgotten well where are you god he told the prophet isaiah to remind the people i have not forgotten you and i will not forget and how is it that he remembers us look at verse 16 behold i have engraved you on the palms of my hands in ancient times markings or tattoos would be used to identify identify the person that might be owned by someone so it was necessarily the master would never have the tattoo but the slave would as identifying marker of who they belong to but here god is telling them he is marked them their names on his body but not a tattoo or a marking but the painful act of engraving engraving see engraving obviously if you've seen it done it's still done the same way today it's a chisel and a hammer and you you chisel it out and he looks at them he says not only will i not forget you but you will be engraving down the palms of my hand and and who demonstrated that he did not forget and who demonstrated his perfect love for us was it not christ receiving in his body on the cross the nails in his hands you see this is the god that's calling you to him every sunday when you think of that moment where we all stop and we leave the things of the world

who are being drawn into the presence of the god who says i engraved you on my hands child i did not forget you this week even though you may feel like i have this is another demonstration because his love endures forever so next sunday when you hear the call to worship hopefully this is the image of the god you will come and bow before to receive more of what he has already promised and faithfully given us the god who has engraved your name forever on his hands do you remember what thomas wanted to see can i see your hands because there's the evidence of your love for me this leads us to the second part of our service which is very significant is the singing of our service so we have the call to worship which is that recognition that this isn't just some kind of a service this is a service this is a experience in front of the holy god who loves us and ways in which that we interact with him and each other is through singing when i ask most people what is the first word that comes to your mind when i say the word worship it's always music which is interesting we definitely sing when we worship but that makes the confusion of what worship is to worship means to orient one's entire life around the object of what's being worshiped so music is the means to accomplish this for sure but it's not the total existence of it the call to worship is really a call to understand that there's nothing more valuable than that which we sing to and about that our life is now governed by this this is what it means to worship my affections my money my time and my voice will be given to the praise of the king but what there's something unique and special that happens if you turn with me to ephesians chapter 5 we looked at this recently there's something super powerful that happens in the presence of the king when we sing to each other look at ephesians 5 and verse 18

Paul says and do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the spirit addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart take note Paul uses a controlling substance to explain the effects that music should have on the mind it should be our minds should be filled with the spirit and therefore under its control what this means is it can be confusing we think it's some kind of a supernatural experience he's talking about the knowledge of the God that lives with inside of you we don't often think about the spirit that lives within us is a part of the triune God so when you are being filled with the knowledge of God's word it is that filling that message that knowledge that the Holy Spirit then uses to guide and direct you and so the more of God's word we have through means of singing which is of all things he says actually begins to control you it fills your mind and not just music but music that is directed toward our Lord from the heart is what he says from the heart and this is why it's so important that at GRC we have gospel focused music that it's not us telling God what we're going to do for God that's not what we need to dwell inside we need the work of Christ to be dwelling in our so we want to sing about what Christ has done and will do and his promises to us we want the truth planted deep inside of us if you in your margins of your note there you can write down a cross reference which is Colossians 3.16 every week the point of music is to have it washed and washing our minds and purifying our hearts listen to this this is Colossians 3.16 let the word of Christ dwell in you richly teaching and admonishing one another in wisdom singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanks give with thankfulness in your hearts to God so he's saying that that music by means of the word is how the

[17:10] Christ in the gospel becomes planted in levels of richness is what he says so when we gather to sing yes we want to sing for the glory of God and for his great name and we want to sing for our enjoyment but we need to realize that it is a supernatural command that it is through this music that God then plants deep within inside our hearts the truth of who he is if you want to also write this in the margins of your note this is Romans 12.2 he says do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind and how is it that Paul says your mind is renewed he says music so music isn't just something we do to fill the time because we need an hour service music isn't something we do so that we can entertain people so they can feel good about themselves music is so that their minds can be renewed and they can turn away from the world so that we can turn away from the world

I mention this verse because it is possible to have the reverse effect in our lives using the same medium if you think about it music is a powerful tool that can help us or it can hurt us ask yourself this if the music you listen to all week in comparative to what we do in the Sunday mornings is presented before the courts of heaven as indwelling or even just a reflection of who the nature of God is would it stand against the judge in the courts of heaven how would the words and the messaging stand we wonder why we struggle with things like lust and anger and violence and jealousy and abuse and the wrong views of sexuality and marriage if the positive words can change our actions what makes it think that the negative words can also change our actions see the enemy is filling our minds with lies and we gladly pay him to do it now I know

I am making many of us uncomfortable right now but how else do you apply the purpose of worship in our service if it is not for the renewal of the mind and are we counteracting the work when we're not here I do believe the enemy is at work and he's going to use any means possible and I think music is a powerful way in which he does this this is why it's so significant for us to use it for our benefit because it's commanded and promised to do so so please when you show up on Sundays know that these moments where we take and we sing to each other that God by means of his promises is saying that it will come deep inside to our hearts and it will change the way that we think so that we are not intoxicated by the world like one is intoxicated by wine but we are controlled by the love of our Savior so we've the call to worship singing and prayer

I recently preached on prayer so we're not going to spend a lot of time here you can go back and listen to this sermon one of the last sermons that we preached on the armor of God but there's something unique and very different about individual prayer versus corporate prayer time together we have the opportunity to provide prayers for each other and I truly value this because sometimes when I show up here on a Sunday I lack the energy and the faith that is required to trust my God and when the dear sweet brothers and sisters stand up here and pray for us it strengthens my faith to hear the truth and the requests that they make pay close attention the next few weeks to the people praying and what they're saying see what it is that they ask the Father for on our behalf whose love is steadfast he wants to hear this but these prayers we're not just picking random ones we know that the Bible has called us to pray in certain ways when we gather this is the prayer of praise why we do this is Hebrews 13 15 it says through him then let us continually offer up sacrifices of praise to God that is the fruit of the lips and the acknowledgement of his name we want to stand before each other and remind each other of why God is good and he is good to be praised but in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 1

Paul also tells Timothy that we need to pray for the world around us as well when we gather this is 1 Timothy 2 1 he says first of all then I urge that supplication prayers intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people for kings and all who are in high positions that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life godly and dignified in every way Parker gave us an example of this today this is good and it is pleasing in the sight of our God and Savior who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth can you imagine the Christians who are praying this but yet are in tyrannical countries you see this kind of makes sense for us in the United States but what if someone who lives in a war zone right now he says it's a good thing to do because we want to see everyone including the terrorists and our enemy to be saved what's interesting about prayer at times though and I know this is true of me is that prayer requires faith and this is a complicated one

[23 : 27] I'm going to ask you this how much faith is required for God to hear your prayer and answer it have you ever thought about that how much faith because often the emphasis is put on the faith of whether God would answer or not which is not true you see if an answer to prayer is to come it's based upon the capacity of the one that you requested it to if you walked up to me today and say John would you take me to lunch unless it's all of you I could take one of you to lunch today I have the capacity to do that so no matter how much faith you have and whether I'm going to say yes or no the capacity that I have is yes and I'll do it oh boy I'm going to get a lot of requests today let's go I like Mexican faith when it comes to prayer do you believe enough to open up your heart and mind at least acknowledging that God will hear you that is all the faith that you need can God hear what I am going to say and the answer to that is of course that he can answer it because it's not based upon you that God determines the answers of his prayer it's based upon himself and so at times we stand in weakness

I know there are many of you who have stood up here to pray or in your own homes or for your families and you feel like a fake but you have enough faith to know that I'm going to at least throw this out to God and the promises of his response is his steadfast love endures forever he holds up his hand and says child why would I not listen to you you're engraved on my hands you see it's Satan who wants to keep us away from the blessings of prayer and so we want as a gathered church to receive all of the benefits and the blessings that God has promised because he says that it's the proclamation of the gospel that men come to life it's prayer that God gives us the strength and the means to endure and to fulfill his will and it's the giving of the funds of the church that advances the gospel this is how he designed it he wants us to be involved he wants us to see his work and so the gathered church is not an event for friends it's a supernatural event in the presence of a king who is giving to us endless benefits that I don't even know if we'll ever be able to see in its fullness until we get to heaven and this leads us to the fourth aspect of our

I don't know whatever number we're on I didn't number them the reading of scripture most of us probably know this 1st Timothy chapter 4 if you're still in 1st Timothy 1st Timothy chapter 4 and verse 13 until I come devote yourself to the public reading of scripture to exhortation and to teaching now that that seems like a weird instruction for the people of God but I think it's necessary because how many of you have been in a church where maybe maybe one time scripture was read or referenced that means it was even an issue in early church for whatever reason they were abandoning the reading of scripture and he's like Timothy make sure you devote yourself to this to the public reading so that the people of God can hear the words of God and also to exhortation and teaching so we try and find as much as many opportunities as possible to read and hear from our

God but the moment you lower the value of the word of God in a congregation you will not hear the word of God we want you to believe that God's word is your only hope and so we want to present it as much as we possibly can as the psalmist says God's word is a light to us and without it we will remain in darkness and the dark world is controlled by the enemy and so how is it we resist him how is it that we find hope it's hearing of the light of the gospel of the good news of Christ as we stand here and what encourages me as I was listening to Anthony read this morning and I'm standing over there and I started to get excited because I thought everybody behind me actually believes this this is kind of a cool thought because this is nuts what he was saying it's crazy you were the enemy of God and he showed grace toward you and I'm like I believe that and I'm pretty sure everybody behind me believes that say it louder brother say it longer as a matter of fact go ahead and repeat it it's comforting to know that I am hearing you've all been here some of you have weird views about life and politics and alien all that kind of stuff then you find out someone agrees with you it's like all of a sudden you get excited you agree that's awesome let's talk more that's the purpose of the reading of scripture you agree this is encouraging we need this we need to be reminded of this which then goes to the preaching of the word it's not you'll notice that you aren't just commanded just to read the word but it's to be proclaimed it's to be preached and there is a difference between the preaching and teaching of the word on Sunday mornings in the gathered of the assembly the preaching of the word is what is emphasized

I'm going to read this to you I think this is a helpful commentation about why there's a difference between preaching and teaching there is a difference and it's important it says this in the new testament when the original author wrote about teaching they meant what we mean when we say teaching instructing or educating however when they wrote about preaching they didn't necessarily mean what we mean in the English today when we say the word preach they mean making an announcement or announcing the gospel this is amen brother this is the difference between preaching and teaching in the bible preaching is proclaimed teaching is education preaching is announcing teaching is instructing preaching is making a declaration teaching is making a disciple christian preaching does not merely reference christ it offers him it presses all that christ is and all that he has done and all that he will do into the minds and hearts and wills and conscience of the hearers amen so the difference when you show up on sunday you should come with the expectation of not learning more about jesus but you want him offered to you so that there's something to be done and that is believe that he is sufficient for you john says i write these things that you might believe and so we take the gospel message and we proclaim it to you and we announce to you because this is what karuxo means to proclaim to herald to preach we preach the gospel we herald the good news of what christ has done so the point of this service is to have our hearts and our minds renewed by the gospel from all of scripture because the whole story is a story of redemption beginning to end and so it calls us as brothers and sisters to have faith in christ the christian life is meaningless if we have not faith in the person of christ but we also need a healthy diet of being taught to follow him in all his ways and so teaching is also important but this is different from what happens on sunday morning we provide these lastly this morning i want to talk about the sacraments which is a part of church another argument could be made of not knowing how often this should be done i believe that it seemed that the church whenever it gathered it would really gather around the table of the lord and whenever there were needs of baptism they would baptize them and so it wasn't necessarily a quarterly thing it was when they gathered but what's important not so much arguing whether we should do this week in and week out i want to i want you to be drawn to why you want to be here for it why is it significant to the church turn with me to luke chapter 14 for the second time i'm not going to read the whole entire context but jesus multiple times does this even paul talks about who it is that's worthy to be in the presence of the king who it is that he calls to himself a couple weeks ago we talked about what's the title jesus received jesus friend of the righteous friend of sinners so he tells them in this illustration luke 14 21 go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and cripple and the blind and the lame and the

[33 : 20] servant said sir what you commanded has been done and still there is room and the master said to the servant go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house might be filled what's interesting about who is drawn to the master's table it's the weak it's the broken it's the lame it's the outcast it's the unwanted it's those who live in the streets he he welcomes us into that table it breaks my heart when someone gets word to me or says to me that they didn't take the table this week because of the week that they had i'm like oh did you become a saint you have been fully glorified because the only people i know who don't need the table are glorified saints you see the sacrament the sacred command of

God is the reminder that you are to taste and see that the grace of God is sufficient for you those who see themselves as clean and righteous come to the table and they look at the table with judgment why do they think they belong here but those of us who are broken who know what we have and who we are and the only hope that we have is Christ we grab the hands of each other and say don't leave because his grace is sufficient for us come let's go we need to receive once again the good news of the absolute love and ever enduring love of our father and so we hold in sign the real visible gospel in front of us he says as you hold this in your hands know it is child that i invited you to be here as the enemy and i changed your title in front of you it says adopted child now feed on that truth feed on it and it will sustain you until

I come and this is what happens every week when we gather this isn't just another service this isn't just another time to mark off our moment for the cultural acceptance it's one more day with the father in unique and special way that doesn't happen throughout the rest of the week we all agree let's let's abandon what the world has pulled us into let's gather let's open up the word and let's hear it let's sing it let's pray let's taste it because his love endures forever our service from this moment on wants to reflect and highlight those areas of the service announcements and activities we're going to push that to the beginning before we begin and from the moment we are called in the presence of our king we are not going to stop looking at the king until we hear the benediction and amen and being filled with psalm and hymn and word and prayer and preaching and sacrament we walk out the doors so that we might take the light of the hope to those who have it not and as it's depleted and pulled out of us and as we stumble and fall often before we even get to the parking lot because we judge the preacher on his sermon anyways as we finally get to the car we're reminded

I need to be here again because I'm going to be depleted by the time Sunday comes so hopefully next Sunday we start with the announcements and the welcome and then we will stop and we will stand and you will hear the voice of your everlasting father say now come into my presence and receive from me you cannot you cannot get that anywhere else in the world but in a gospel preaching church is the only place that can be found I'm excited about next week I promise Lord willing we'll be starting first Peter let's pray our father we are humbled that you would want to be with us and that you call us to acknowledge you and to speak your name and to even ask you for your benefits

Lord I ask on behalf of my brothers and sisters not because I am worthy but because you are faithful I ask that you would give us the mercy and grace that we need to believe these truths in the areas of our lives father that we need to repent of that are keeping us from the renewal of our minds that are keeping us from receiving from you and loving each other Lord would you convict our hearts that we might repent and really enjoy your grace in a broken and sinful world and Lord while we wait for you to come we walk by faith in Christ's name amen thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill Tennessee where everyone is in equal need of grace to plan a visit or to learn more about us visit our website at gracereformed.org